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The Identities of Young America: A Case of American Exceptionalism and Emerging Identities in Letters From an American Farmer

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ABSTRACT
This article is an attempt to examine the emerging identities and the primary examples of exceptionalism in early American literature by a review of excerpts from the "Letters from an American Farmer" written by J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur. To this end, after a brief introduction, exceptionalism is defined and explained as a political and ideological attitude. Then, a brief overview of pre-revolution and war literature is provided along with some prominent examples of literary works. Finally, after introducing the author's work, the third letter of the above series entitled "What is an American?" is selected and analyzed within the theoretical framework of this article which addresses the emergence of American identity in early literary works. More specifically, the present article examines the American social life, emerging identities and the early signs of exceptionalism from Crèvecoeur's perspective. As a conclusion, the analysis of selected excerpts shows that there are rudimentary elements and examples of this ideology in the case under study.

Keywords: American literature, American exceptionalism, national pride, social identity

INTRODUCTION

The strong link between social identity and literature has received a great deal of attention in academic research. For instance, the social identity theory and self-categorization theories generally claim that the social identity of individuals in a given group eventually leads them to perceive themselves differently from the outsiders. These theories also suggest that this positive distinctiveness or desire for positive self-image may also nurture an "us-versus-them" paradigm (see, Turner & Oakes, 1986; Turner & Reynolds, 2010). These features may describe individuals, elite groups such as writers with strong collective bonds and, on a larger scale, communities and nations. In a narrower context, the literatures of nations also contain strong aspects of national and historical consciousness that appear in stories, novels, biographies and social documentaries. According to the assumptions of social identity theory, literary works do not exist in a vacuum and are influenced by historical, political and social events. In this respect, the present research examines the historical roots of distinctive identities in American literature.

Even in the modern assumptions of the 21st century which consider the world as a global village, the United States is still a remarkably vast country isolated by two oceans and, in many ways, an exceptional land that continues to incorporate different cultures, traditions and races.

Accordingly, the American culture as a whole is said to be an expansion of the Western cultures enriched by the immigration of different ethnic groups over the centuries. For this reason, the unique territorial, geographical and anthropological features of the nation and, more importantly, its political and philosophical ideologies have been treated exceptionally in books written by non-American authors. A case in point is "De La Démocratie en Amérique (Democracy in America)" in which the French diplomat and writer Alexis de Tocqueville refers to the same concept (de Tocqueville, 1835; 1945). In this sense, there has been a controversial view in American history, both among native and foreign writers, that the United States is an exceptional country that not only perceives itself in this manner but is also sometimes described likewise by other nations. This view, which has been supported by independent studies of the United States for centuries, has always been controversial. In a special sense, the country being the first of new nations has always produced unique texts and cultures for non-native researchers. Some historical evidence of this exceptionalism can be seen in epoch-making texts, and especially in early American literary works. Following this line of research, the present study examines the emerging social identity in the Letters from an American Farmer which is one of the most important literary works written by J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur in pre-independence American history. The book examines the emergence of an independent American identity and nationhood. Based on the consensus among the historians and scholars of the American literature, it is also one of the first exclusively American literary works to provide valuable insight into a historically, socially, and culturally unique style of writing about pre-revolutionary America. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to examine the roots of exceptionalism and independent American identity in the context of this work by analyzing some excerpts and placing them in a historical and social context according to current American values.

LITERATURE REVIEW

American Exceptionalism: An Overview

Naturally, providing a detailed account of the historical and cultural roots of American exceptionalism is beyond the scope of this essay. However, in order to begin this review, it first seems necessary to provide a comprehensive definition of American exceptionalism and examine the origins and historical background that come to light when we think of the applications of this concept. According to the literature, American exceptionalism means that the United States is inherently a different nation from the rest of the world and, of course, the meaning of this grand assumption is that the United States thus has a global mission and essentially plays a special role among other nations. While this statement might have a strong basis in today's geopolitical realities given the size of the US military, economy and global influence, some scholars such as Seymour Martin Lipset have indicated that an American exceptionalism dates back to the time when the country did not enjoy a superpower status or was not even considered a united nation in its modern sense. (see, for instance, Lipset, 1996; Pease, 2009). The roots of this controversy can be found in the epic pre-revolutionary America. Interestingly, an illustration of this point was given by Thomas Paine in his colossal work entitled "The Common Sense" in which he tried to develop an ideological basis for American independence from the Great Britain. In the manuscript which was published early in the Revolution in 1776, he enumerated the unique features of the American colonies that basically showed the exceptional nature of the United States. The Common Sense is one of the most popular intellectual and historical works among Americans and is still widely published. However, it was significant in its own era because the author also tried to develop an independent political identity for Americans which, according to some scholars, even went

beyond the realities of that time and projected an ideal which was to be sought by the revolutionaries (Paine, 1986). From Paine's writings, we can understand the new Americanized expectations of some ancient concepts such as republicanism and religious freedom or common liberties which had been widely rejected in Europe because they were bold concepts at that time. With the institutionalization of these values in the hearts of revolutionary Americans, as historian Thomas Kidd (2010, p. 9) writes, "a significant conceptual shift convinced Americans across the theological spectrum that God was raising America for some particular purpose". It can be asserted that the exceptionalism of pre-revolutionary America did not stem from a secular tradition. Rather, as some historians such as Sydney Ahlstrom, Francis Bremer and James Cooper have claimed, it was nurtured by deep-seated religious beliefs partly based on the Puritan tradition (Aslstrom, 2004; Bremer, 1995; 2009; Cooper, 1999). Such references can also be seen in Paine's Common Sense.

Another revolutionary intellectual whose work described the exceptional color of the independence movement was Thomas Jefferson, who was later remembered specifically for his idealistic notions in "the Empire of Liberty." Jefferson called the United States the first empire of liberty by developing this concept and giving the country a global role in spreading freedom throughout the world. The importance of his theories lies in the fact that generations after Jefferson have adopted the same concept by imitating him in interpreting the global role and position of the United States. It should be noted that the above concept has been approached differently by writers, historians, political analysts and social theorists of different eras. What intellectuals like Paine and Jefferson embraced was the idea of republicanism and religious freedom and, in this way, they also used symbolic biblical expressions. The most obvious symbolic phrase and the closest to the subject of this article is "A City upon a Hill". Historically, this phrase is known for John Winthrop's famous statement and his symbolic work called "A Model of Christian Charity (1630)" in which he wrote that "we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us". The phrase which has appeared repeatedly in American literary and cultural works, is used today in globalist politics and political discourse to describe America as a "beacon of hope" for the rest of the world. Accordingly, the first generations of American revolutionaries considered the colonies as the Promised Land and a valuable place for Christianity, especially the Puritanism. But, on the other hand, it should be considered that American exceptionalism was referred to in various ways before and after the American Revolution by a number of prominent European visitors and writers such as Alexis de Tocqueville. The phrase itself was first coined by the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin in 1929. Stalin used this phrase to criticize the American communists who claimed that the United States was an exceptional case with little capacity to form strong communist parties. Thus, this concept was first expressed in the form of a Marxist theory in which all nations were subject to common social conditions in which it was possible to crystallize socialist values or the elements that shape Marxist theory (see, for more discussion, Balibar, 1995). In other words, Marxism was conceived as a universally accepted belief-system that could be practiced in all societies, but no socialist or communist party had been formed in the United States, and this in itself prompted extensive research by sociologists and American and European theorists such as Jay Lovestone, Seymour Martin Lipset, Robert J. Alexander, Theodore Draper and others (see, Alexander, 1981; Draper, 1957; 1960; LeBlank & Davenport, 2012). Such works added strength to the idea that the United States was indeed exceptional in that some of the Marxist worldviews simply did not apply to the American society. For instance, Jay Lovestone, the leader of the Communist Party USA, had claimed that the United States was unique for a variety of reasons and some theoretical assumptions which were advanced by Marxists are basically impossible to form in American societies. In short, the theory of exceptionalism concluded that

the foundations of capitalism in the United States were stronger compared to other developed countries and this reality had forced American socialists to pursue moderate or different strategies.

However, before examining the possibility of the formation of socialism or communism on American soil in a way in which it had gained popularity in other Western countries, researchers examined the historical features, political system and social values that Americans have in quite separate terms. Over the decades, they had developed the theory that the United States was exceptional. Today, the concept is increasingly debated in international politics especially in the context of the US government's military intervention around the world, but its roots must be traced to the formation of a strong American identity that first appeared in the form of revolution and independence. In other words, as the historical evidence suggests, this form of exceptionalism began in the art and literature of America's British colonies. In the final analysis, despite the fact that the United States can be truly unique in many ways, today most of the published works that have addressed the issue critically, have also considered American exceptionalism as a myth and even a dangerous one that can have crippling consequences for the United States and the world. An example cited in most critical writings is US military intervention, especially fruitless nation-building efforts during the Bush presidency. Nevertheless, the question here is whether these distinctive cultural features are reflected in American literature and especially in writings produced before or shortly after the American Revolution. Here, the point upon which there seems to be a strong consensus is that the United States has strong revolutionary origins and this intellectual tradition must have had remarkable manifestations in the first examples of American literature.

American Exceptionalism, Its Manifestations in Early American Literature and the Literary Writings of the Revolutionary Generation

It should be noted that American literature and indeed literary works written in English were limited to the English-speaking colonies on the east coasts of the United States. While languages such as Dutch, German and Spanish were also used by some of the colonists in New England, the literary writings of the colonists were largely influenced by the literature of their British motherland and, to a greater extent, the European literature. Hence, the most common literary style among some of the implanted Englishmen living in the colonies was the Puritan literary style which had certain religious themes. The Puritans were a group of Protestants who broke away from the Church of England and established a particular way of life based on strict religious disciplines. The prominent historian, Richard Gray indicates that these Puritans had a tremendous influence on almost all the works published in the colonies before the revolution (Gray, 2011). The influence was so strong that almost all the works of this period were reflected in a certain religious context. Gradually, however, American writers went beyond this literary genre and reflected on experiences and perspectives that were directly related to sociopolitical concerns in the colonies. In the years before the revolution, themes such as America's unique nature, social and religious freedoms in the new land, and everyday innovations found their way into texts and documents and the authors generally preferred a more informal writing style. As noted by some scholars, the settlers reached a point beyond which there was simply no imitation of the British written or spoken style (Gray, 2011).

For decades, the texts available to the first settlers in the new land were limited to the Bible and classic religious texts. However, other works appeared gradually and perhaps the most famous example was the Poor Richard's Almanack that was written by Benjamin Franklin and was published in 1732. Franklin introduced many of the original American proverbs into the common language of English-speaking colonists (see, Franklin, 2005). In this way, his

contribution to the settlers' intellectual and literary development is said to have been remarkable. In this regard, the historians of American literature believe that most of the works of this period describe everyday life in New England and depict moral virtues such as self-reliance, personal ambition, curiosity, pragmatism, and optimism, some of which were unique to American communities. In an important work called "The Colonial Experience", David Hawke, one of the leading authors of this era, describes this emerging American literary style. For example, the distance of this language and literature from that of the British Mother Land was such that, after American independence, there was an urgent need for American English standardization and therefore Noah Webster's Blue-Backed Speller was published in 1783 which was an important book in its own category.

Although printing houses existed in most American colonies by 1760, it is said that the Americans desperately needed English publishers and print houses to use materials such as textbooks taught at schools. However, in the 1760s, political writings became more popular within the British colonies and these political writings sometimes had a forceful and direct tone. The unprecedented consumption of this type of writing which, as noted earlier, resulted in the emergence of an independent and almost unbridled identity in the British colonies, made political and independence movements the main focus of works printed in America. In 1764, for example, a Boston lawyer named James Otis Jr. wrote "The Rights of British Colonists Asserted and Proved", which greatly influenced the minds and thoughts of his readers. As noted by some literary historians, political interests quickly spread to literary genres, the most common of which was satire, which appeared in the form of poems, articles, and plays (Breen, 1998; Brennan, 1939; Ferrell, 2006). According to historical records, these critical writings mainly targeted pro-British figures and were very popular with the colonists. The prominent playwrights of the period include John Leacock and Mercy Otis Warren who wrote their works symbolically and used the mythical characters of ancient Greece and Rome in their writings to develop their characters. Particularly, Warren's "Adulateur" is cited as a prominent example among such works because it attracted a large audience during and after the American Revolution.

However, as stated previously, the most prominent intellectual figure of this era was considered Benjamin Franklin, who wrote political satires that had a critical content against the policies of Great Britain and especially the tax policies in the colonies. Behind this strongly critical writing was an independent and justice-seeking identity that rebelled against unjust and cruel rule. In fact, before the long battle against the British took place on multiple battlefields, a battle of words had begun with the creation of epic and patriotic works for the Americans. While this might be true of all genuine and well-planned revolutions in history, the case of the American revolution is a prime model. As the historians such as Gary Nash and John Miller have noted, while the pro-independence intellectuals of the time were influenced by this poetic and unique literature and discourse, the common people and those who could not read or write still attended meetings where patriotic poems were recited passionately (Miller, 1943; Nash, 2005). The patriotic themes of these works were interesting to the public. It is worth mentioning that many of these poems were created by anonymous poets in the midst of the war with the British and they soon became the battle cry of the revolutionary forces. Perhaps, a good example which has survived to this day is the "Yankee Doodle" which soon turned into a popular folk song used in battles. Of all the gifted and influential poets of this period, one can mention Philip Freneau and Phillis Wheatley who are among the most famous poets of the revolution. As stated earlier, all of these political developments were created primarily in words before they were put into practice. These words offered miscellaneous themes. Some of these writings such as Thomas Paine's "Common Sense", had strong political and argumentative

aspects, while others such as John Dickinson's novel entitled "Olive Ranch Petition" expressed daily struggles and social injustice. Addressing and mentioning the titles of all these works is beyond the scope of this research, but numerous publications and articles have dealt with the details and creativity used in American wartime literature. In fact, the patriotic writings of that period were compiled in various genres of poetry and prose and, in this respect, no revolution can be found in the world in which the role of literature was so significant. In this regard, the scholarly study of the links between literature and ideology has received some attention (see, for example, Althusser, 1971) and American literature has been specifically studied in terms of its intrinsic links with American ideologies (Appleby, 1992; Williams, 1976).

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that the literary writings of the New World in the decades before the revolution not only reflected social and human concerns, but also expressed a kind of exceptional ideology among the inhabitants of the colonies. Some scholars have attributed this exceptionalism to the character of the early generations of immigrants who could not identify with the Old World and came to a pristine and untouched land located on the farthest frontiers of the world to begin a new life and bring their unique lifestyles and beliefs to fruition. Other scholars, such as Thomas Byers and Myra Jehlen, have argued that the inhabitants of these colonies not only acquired an independent and different identity, but also a global mission because of their religious teachings, philosophical ideas, and free lifestyle (Jehlen, 1986). Myra Jehlen discusses in her book entitled the American Incarnation that the New Land was a pristine place to exploit liberal individualism, which was originally conceived in Europe as a form of rebellious and impractical thought. Interestingly, this belief is evident in the works of the founders of the nation and the intellectuals and writers of the revolutionary generation.

From the contents of the above literary works, it can be inferred that some of these struggles and battles, especially those that were recorded in written works, were not just for independence from the British motherland; rather, they suggested a model of governance or a beacon of light developed by the first post-colonial nation for other nations. In fact, the legacy of this type of thought has been so profound that American political leaders today can only be thought of as moderate or strong believers when it comes to American exceptionalism.

Case study: Letters from an American Writer

It can be inferred that American literature, at least in its original form, was essentially non-British. Moreover, it was essentially written for the middle-class white men who had the ability to create social change collectively. However, the distinction from the British literature occurred over time at the heart of political and social developments. Therefore, it is important to find the original traces of American identity in earlier literary works. As stated above, the general theme of this article is exceptionalism in American literature, but the main theme is the underlying factors in the emergence of an independent American identity that ultimately led to this perceived exceptionalism among Europe-born Americans. Here, it should be noted that the distinguishing features of culture, language and lifestyle in the British colonies was an issue that was not hidden from the eyes of non-American observers and visitors. Many have recorded their valuable observations in the form of historical and documented reports, travelogues and sometimes in the form of fiction. In this sense, these authentic documents can be used in the analysis of the social spirit in a particular period of American history. The distinctive work studied in this article is the "Letters from an American Farmer" by the French-American author J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur. The book will be introduced and analyzed briefly in this section of the article with the aim of clarifying the distinctive features of American identity in the eighteenth century. This work, as the title suggests, is a collection of letters with different

subjects and themes which was published in 1782, in which the author tried to use the language of a fictional character to describe the local customs, cultures and sometimes social facts. It is particularly useful as a record of the political and social developments observed in the author's environment or the British-American colonies. The book consists of 12 letters written in the documentary style and the important point is that the author began writing this book before the American Revolution. Therefore, the observations recorded in this work can have historical value in addition to literary value as the letters were completed over the course of seven years. Before writing the letters, Crèvecoeur had traveled in the British colonies for several years. After making various observations, the author finally settled in New York in 1765 and became a naturalized British subject. The "Letters from an American Farmer" is in fact the product of a time when he decided to crystalize his observations and the experiences of previous years when he finally settled in a farmland in Orange County New York. The writing depicts the opinions of a simple farmer called James who is introduced to the readers in the first section of the book. James is a resident of Pennsylvania and it should be noted that the author had traveled extensively in that region before writing the book. The records show that he was closely acquainted with the lifestyle of its inhabitants, therefore it can be inferred that the choice of location was based on his previous experiences. The letters are also addressed to an Englishman named 'Mr F. B.' and there is no consensus among scholars regarding his true identity and, indeed, this Englishman might have been an imaginary character created by the author to underline the content of the letters. Crèvecoeur's biography shows that he has lived a turbulent life full of misfortunes and sometimes sufferings that are also worth noting (see, for more discussion, Plotkin, 1964). In fact, the life of the author is so complex that it can be the subject of further research. However, in this article, what is set as the goal is to examine the content of the letters briefly and the establish the social and cultural facts that can be inferred from them.

In sum, the letters were selected as a literary, historical, cultural, and social record that can confirm some of the arguments discussed earlier. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that they can have other benefits which can be attributed to the legacy and public acceptance of this work considered today as one of the most significant works in American literature. It is also one of the first works to offer a detailed description of life and natural attractions including agricultural and botanical activities in America. Another reason for paying attention to this book can be the style used in writing the letters, which is a kind of historical documentary based on sociological observations. Throughout the work, what surprises the readers is the lack of thematic unity and the sudden change of tone and sentimental fluctuations in the letters. For example, one of the bitter realities described by the author is the subject of slave trade, which even at that time was a controversial and disuniting subject among the settlers. Serious subjects such as these were not related to the theme of other letters. The scattered and disconnected nature of the work has also caused the book to be examined through a different lens by researchers in different disciplines. Nevertheless, what makes it relevant to this article is the emergence of a unique American identity. In this regard, the author makes an attempt to answer this question specifically in the third letter entitled "What Is an American?" by writing the below words:

> "What then is the American, this new man? He is either a European or the descendant of a European; hence that strange mixture of blood which you will find in no other country. I could point out to you a man whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations. He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced,

> the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great Alma Mater." (de Crèvecoeur, 1981, p. 69)

Here, from the author's point of view, the American identity in the eighteenth century is almost identical to today's realities, arising from a combination of race and identity that washes away old manners and prejudices through several generations and creates new affiliations in this new Alma Mater. From this short answer, it can be also seen that in the eighteenth century and even before the revolution, the United States was a melting pot of different races that no longer had a strong and essential connection with the country of origin and this is in itself a prescription for independence. A Frenchman himself, the author describes this amazing fact as "a strange mixture of blood." Although in the author's description, an American is still a European, his new identity is determined by the environment in which he lives and this is a form of environmental determinism that a group of researchers have discovered in this original work. In this text, the author draws several comparisons between the American and European environments, and the implicit message of the third letter is that societies are subject to the conditions imposed by the environment and, naturally, the identities of individuals are formed in societies that frequently engage in similar activities. But the tone used in "What is an American?" is not that of an omniscient author; rather, it is a description of a real image, citing observations and experiences gained over the years. However, the element of environment and particularly a natural and intact environment that provides great potential for spiritual and physical development, always plays a central role in the author's writings to such a degree that the letter begins with a reference to the initial bewilderment experienced by the European immigrants and settlers when they saw the New Land. The author expresses this feeling in the following words:

> "I wish I could be acquainted with the feelings and thoughts which must agitate the heart and present themselves to the mind of an enlightened Englishman when he first lands on this continent. He must greatly rejoice that he lived at a time to see this fair country discovered and settled. He must necessarily feel a share of national pride when he views the chain of settlements which embellishes these extended shores. When he says to himself, this is the work of my countrymen who, when convulsed by factions, afflicted by a variety of miseries and wants, restless and impatient, took refuge here. They brought along with them their national genius to which they principally owe what liberty they enjoy and what substance they possess. Here he sees the industry of his native country displayed in a new manner and traces in their works the embryos of all the arts, sciences, and ingenuity which flourish in Europe. Here he beholds fair cities, substantial villages, extensive fields, an immense country filled with decent houses, good roads, orchards, meadows, and bridges, where a hundred years ago all was wild, woody, and uncultivated!" (de Crèvecoeur, 1981, p. 66)

The emotional aspect and the romantic tone seen in the beginning of Letter III is almost as strong in the rest of the letter, but what plays a key role in Crèvecoeur's statements and is relevant to the subject of this article is the issue of national pride. Another dimension of American identity can be understood if the above excerpt is considered along with the author's response to "what is an American?". Here, national pride seems to be synonymous with the ability of the free man to exploit the natural environment, explore the nature and dominate modern resources and constructions. The above description can be partly indicative of American exceptionalism because this might be how America has always looked at the world.

Through these glasses, the world is a natural field that an American must exploit to promote personal freedom and progress. In this sense, the author suggests that exploring, discovering and developing these virgin territories are a divine blessing. According to Crèvecoeur, the curiosity that flows in the hearts of immigrants must be tied to a national genius in order to be successful in conquering nature. In other words, each of these immigrants brings a wealth of experience and skills to this new land. However, another strong element of identity is revealed at the very beginning of Letter III, and that is the reliance on hope – hope for a better tomorrow. The author highlights the unrest, restlessness and bitter experiences of immigrants in their homelands and considers this new land as a cure for those pains. In short, in this literary-historical work, national pride is pollinated by developing and cultivating what was once wild and uncultivated. This being said, another dimension can be added to this textual analysis. For instance, at the beginning of this article, the theory of self-categorization and social identity was indicated. These social theories rely on elements that the individual and societies develop in a wider context by institutionalizing the perceived differences in order to develop an independent and distinct identity. Given that Crèvecoeur began creating this work before the American Revolutionary War, it can be asserted that this individual identity quickly leads to a social and political comparison between the British colonies and the European native lands. From the author's point of view, America offers a more benevolent environment because it is a free and fair land that breaks away from unjust European traditions, thus making America the first postcolonial nation. This distinct identity is evident in the descriptions in Letter III. Seemingly, it is based on an ideological rift between Europe and the British colonies because, as seen in the author's words below, the new land provides a laudable social justice:

> "It is not composed, as in Europe, of great lords who possess everything and of a herd of people who have nothing. Here are no aristocratical families, no courts, no kings, no bishops, no ecclesiastical dominion, no invisible power giving to a few a very visible one; no great manufacturers employing thousands, no great refinements of luxury. The rich and the poor are not so far removed from each other as they are in Europe." (de Crèvecoeur, 1981, p. 67)

There seems to be a common denominator among all European immigrants that the author has rightly pointed out. Almost all of these immigrants had turned away from a discriminatory and unjust system that had virtually deprived them of any possibility of social progress. Furthermore, these immigrants had set foot on a land that the author likens to heaven in his letters. The proponents of the social identity theory claim that what unites individuals is commonalities and, particularly, the commonalities that arise not from individuals' pasts, but from their current situation and what they now share (Turner & Oakes, 1986; Turner & Reynolds, 2010). It is clear that the first inhabitants of the United States were of different lineages but ultimately sought a common destiny which, in the author's opinion, gave them a new identity as described below:

> "A European, when he first arrives, seems limited in intentions as well as in his views; but he very suddenly alters his scale. Two hundred miles formerly appeared a very great distance; it is now but a trifle. He no sooner breathes our air than he forms schemes and embarks in designs [plans] he never would have thought of in his own country. There the plenitude of society confines many useful ideas, and often extinguishes the most laudable schemes which here ripen into maturity. Thus Europeans become Americans". (de Crèvecoeur, 1981, p. 81)

An analysis of these excerpts suggests that American exceptionalism in its eighteenth-century sense evoked a combination of freedom, equality and space for Americans. In this dreamland, each man is his own master and owns his farm and, more importantly, there is no powerful government to rule the settlers. The achievement of this idea and the realization of its ideals ultimately leads the author to an overt exceptionalism when he says:

> "We have no princes for whom we toil, starve, and bleed. We are the most perfect society now existing in the world. Here man is free as he ought to be. . ." (de Crèvecoeur, 1981, p. 67)

CONCLUSION

The present study conducted a review of the literature in an attempt to show the roots of emerging identities in early American literature and its impact on American exceptionalism. For this purpose, "Letters from an American Writer" and specifically the third letter of these series called "What is an American?" were briefly reviewed. Within this theoretical framework, two questions were implicitly followed in this article. The first question addressed the dimensions of American identity and the second question dealt with the description of primitive exceptionalism in the above case as one of the earliest examples of American literature. An analysis of these excerpts suggests that American exceptionalism in its eighteenth-century sense depicted a combination of freedom, equality and space for Americans. Here, it can be concluded that Letter III highlights key concepts that are still the hallmarks of American ideology today. These characteristics include individual freedoms, equality, religious tolerance and the insistence on non-statism or, in other words, minimal government intervention in the lives of citizens. From the writer's point of view, the United States is the most perfect society in the world because it has these characteristics. In this connection, the statements observed in Letter III, some parts of which were analyzed in this article, consider the colonies an exceptional country that is fundamentally different from the European motherland. Another key element in this case study is the profound impact of the element of space or environment on the author's views because he sees the new space as a factor in the liberation and empowerment of European immigrants and, in this sense, the United States is almost portrayed as a Promised Land. In the words of the author, this land washes way the prejudices and calamities of the past lives of the immigrants and gives them an opportunity for salvation. In short, it depicts a liberating idealism for Americans. In Letter III, Crèvecoeur somehow justifies this new identity by using the Latin term "ubis panis ibi patria" which literally means "where this is bread, there is country". It was stated earlier that, according to the literature, American exceptionalism means that the United States is inherently a nation different from the rest of the world and the meaning of this grand assumption is that the United States therefore has a global mission and essentially plays a special role among other nations.

It can be asserted that even before the United States achieved a superpower status, there was a national pride and a sense of uniqueness in the consciousness of its first settlers. The analysis of the above case shows some aspects of this perceived uniqueness. However, this national pride had to lay the groundwork for American independence before it could be turned into "a beacon of light" for other nations, and that concept is developed in Crèvecoeur's Letters from an American Farmer.

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